

## **Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language**

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Paper 4

Language policy in education and the role of English in India:  
From library language to language of empowerment  
by Ramanujam Meganathan

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## Language policy in education and the role of English in India: From library language to language of empowerment

Ramanujam Meganathan

### Introduction

*Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. Aspiration of such magnitude is a heavy burden for any language, and for those who have responsibility for teaching it, to bear. The challenges of providing universal access to English are significant, and many are bound to feel frustrated at the speed of progress. But we cannot ignore the way that the English language has emerged as a powerful agent for change in India. (Graddol 2010:120)*

This chapter explores language policy-making processes in the Indian context, implementation issues and the place and role of English in school education. Language in education policy derives from the Indian Constitution which guarantees linguistic rights to all citizens; most importantly, members of minority groups (both religious and linguistic) are granted a special right to be educated in their mother tongue. Despite this consensus, there have been numerous political and educational controversies regarding implementation of these constitutional provisions.

The national language policy (or strategy) for school education, the three-language formula recommended by the National Commission on Education 1964–1966, was incorporated into the national education policies of 1968 and 1986. Accommodating at least three-languages in school education has been seen as a convenient strategy, but concerns have also been expressed from various quarters about its 'unsatisfactory' implementation.

India's pluralism is reflected in its linguistic diversity. According to the 1971 census, the country has 1,652 languages belonging to five different language families: Indo-

Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burmese and Semito-Hamitic (GOI 1971). The Indian constitution identifies 22 'recognised languages'. About 87 languages are used in print media, 71 languages are used on radio and the administration of the country is conducted in 15 languages. According to Rao (2008), two decades ago the number of languages used as media of instruction was about 60 but by the time Rao's study was carried out the number had dropped to 47. (As we will see below, it appears that this number has now fallen further still.) English – formerly perceived as a library language and the language of higher education – is now in demand by every quarter as a means of progress and the key to a better life. As Graddol points out, the language which was a 'key part of the mechanism of exclusion because of its very unequal distribution in society' is now seen 'as a means of inclusion' (Graddol 2010:120). The English language in India today is both an admired and a hated phenomenon. On the one hand, there is an increasing demand for the language which is associated with progress and development, while on the other the language is perceived as a killer of native or indigenous languages.

The demand for English emerges from many factors, as recognised by the position paper on the teaching of English produced by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT 2006) in connection with the National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCERT 2005):

*English in India today is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life ... The level of introduction of English has now become a matter of political response to people's aspirations, rendering almost irrelevant an academic debate on the merits of a very early introduction. (NCERT 2006:1)*

However, the disparity in the quality of English language education experienced by children further intensifies the already existing divide between English language-rich and English language-poor children. The present condition of English language teaching in the varied contexts of India is summed up in the following manner:

1. ↑↑TP ↑↑EE (e.g. English medium private/government aided elite schools): Proficient teachers; varying degrees of English in the environment, including as a home or first language.
2. ↑TP ↑EE (e.g. New English medium; private schools, many of which use both English and other Indian languages): Teachers with limited proficiency; children with little or no background in English; parents aspire to upward mobility through English.
3. ↓TP ↓EE (e.g. Government-aided regional medium schools): Schools with a tradition of English education along with regional languages, established by educational societies, with children from a variety of backgrounds.
4. ↓↓TP ↓↓EE (e.g. Government regional medium schools run by district and municipal education authorities): They enrol the largest number of elementary school children in rural India. They are also the only choice for the urban poor (who, however, have some options of access to English in the environment). Their teacher may be the least proficient in English in these four types of school.

TP = Teachers' English language proficiency; EE = English language environment  
(*Kurrien 2005 quoted in NCERT 2006:9*)

The rest of this chapter consists of seven sections, beginning with a brief historical overview of the three-language policy. The next section discusses the number of languages taught in Indian schools. This is followed by details of languages taught as first, second and third languages. The following section looks at the languages used as media of instruction. There is then a section focusing on the introduction of the second and third languages. The penultimate section then summarises all the findings reported here which relate to English and the chapter ends with a conclusion.

## **Language policy in school education: The three-language formula**

Language planning for school education in India can be seen more as a question of status planning rather than corpus or acquisition planning. The language policy which emerged as a political consensus in the formative years of independence is also an illustration of democratic processes in the Asian context. The three-language formula emerged as a policy or a strategy after a quarter of a century of debate and deliberations from political and academic perspectives by educational advisory bodies and politicians representing national and regional interests.

The Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE), the oldest statutory body on education in India, initiated the discussion on languages in school education in the 1940s and this continued to be a major concern in their discussions until 1960. CABE identified five major issues which required attention:

1. The number of languages to be taught at various levels of school education
2. The introduction of second and third languages
3. The place and role of English
4. The place and role of Hindi
5. The teaching of Sanskrit and minor language(s) in school.

The Board devised the 'three-language formula' in its 23rd meeting held in 1956 with a view to removing inequalities among the languages of India. It recommended that three-languages should be taught in the Hindi as well as non-Hindi-speaking areas of the country at the middle and high school stages and suggested the following two possible formulae:

1. (a) i. Mother tongue or  
ii. Regional language or  
iii. A composite course of mother tongue and a regional language or  
iv. A composite course of mother tongue and a classical language or  
v. A composite course of regional language or a classical language,  
(b) Hindi or English  
(c) A modern Indian language or a modern European language provided it has not already been taken under (a) and (b) above.

2. (a) As above
- (b) English or a modern European language
- (c) Hindi (for non-Hindi-speaking areas) or another modern Indian language (for Hindi-speaking areas)

**(MOE 1957, quoted in Agarwal 1993:79)**

The three-language formula was simplified and approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1961 as follows:

1. The regional language or the mother tongue when the latter is different from the regional language
2. Hindi or any other Indian language in Hindi speaking areas; and
3. English or any other modern European language.

**(GOI 1962:67)**

CABE also deliberated in detail on the study of English as a compulsory subject as recommended by the education ministers' conference held in 1957:

1. English should be taught as a compulsory language both at the secondary and the university stages, students acquire adequate knowledge of English so as to be able to receive education through this language at the university level.
2. English should not be introduced earlier than class V. The precise point at which English should be started at the middle stage was left to each individual state to decide.

**(MOE 1957, quoted in Agarwal 1993:98)**

A comprehensive view of the study of languages at school was undertaken and concrete recommendations were made by the Education Commission between 1964 and 1966 (MOE 1966). The Commission, having taken account of the diversity of the Indian context, recommended a modified or graduated three-language formula:

1. The mother tongue or the regional language
2. The official language of the Union or the associate official language of the Union so long as it exists; and
3. A modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (1) and (2) and other than that used as the medium of instruction.

**(MOE 1966:192)**

The Commission's observation on the status and role of English is of importance from the point of view of language planning and the way the language was perceived by policy planners. The Commission said:

*English will continue to enjoy a high status so long as it remains the principal medium of education at the university stage, and the language of administration at the Central Government and in many of the states. Even after the regional languages become media of higher education in the universities, a working knowledge of English will be a valuable asset for all students and a reasonable proficiency in the language will be necessary for those who proceed to the university. (MOE 1966:192)*

This brief historical scan of the evolution of the language policy in India tells us how the apprehension about the dominance of English (as a colonial language which signifies the master's language) has been naturally alleviated by the role which the language has attained. This is in spite of the efforts (political and systemic) to contain its spread. Today, every child and parent wants the language.

## **Number of languages available and taught**

The Sixth All India School Education Survey in 1993 explored the number of languages actually taught and the number of languages actually used as media of instruction at different stages of schooling throughout India. It also found the number and percentage of schools teaching particular languages and using specific languages as media of instruction (NCERT 1993). The Seventh All India Survey replicated this research in 2002 and its report was published in 2007 (NCERT 2007).

According to the 2002 Survey, the number of schools in the country having primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages are 850,421, 337,980, 130,675 and 43,869 respectively (NCERT 2007).

Some of the findings of the two surveys are summarised in Table 1.

*Table 1: School language policies in India ( per cent)*

Policies	Primary		Upper primary		Secondary	
	1993	2002	1993	2002	1993	2002
'Three-Language Formula' offered	*	*	82.16	90.61	79.54	84.86
Two or more languages offered	34.85	91.95	95.56	90.61	96.65	84.86
Hindi taught as first language	40.49	59.70	38.25	39.92	30.85	33.08
Hindi taught as second language	11.97	-	29.81	-	31.99	-
English taught as first language**	2.09	-	4.52	9.89	6.57	13.26
English taught as second language	60.33	-	55.05	-	54.12	-

\*The Three-language Formula comes into effect from Class 6.

\*\*Although it is very difficult to define English as a first language in India, some schools and school systems mentioned it as a first language.

Table 1 shows that in 2002 nearly 91 per cent of schools followed the three-language formula at the upper primary stage and almost 85 per cent did so at the secondary stage. An increase in the percentage of schools following the formula can be seen because in 1993 the corresponding figures were 82 per cent and almost 80 per cent respectively.

Table 1 also reveals that in 2002 almost 40 per cent of schools at the upper primary stage and 33 per cent at the secondary stage were teaching Hindi as a first language. These figures show a slight increase compared to 1993 when the comparable figures were 38 per cent and 31 per cent respectively.

Meanwhile, in 2002 almost ten per cent of schools at the upper primary stage and 13 per cent of schools at the secondary stage claimed to be teaching English as a first language. Although these figures are still relatively modest they indicate that the percentage of schools teaching English as a first language had more or less doubled over a period of ten years, from five per cent and seven per cent respectively. (It has to be remembered that the term 'first language' is used here in the context of India's three-language policy. In other words, it is the first language which the child encounters at school and not necessarily the child's own first language or mother tongue.)

Box 1 lists all the languages taught in each state and Union Territory. The information shown here was collected from curricular documents, syllabi and statements by officials in the states and UTs. The information covers all stages of schooling from Primary to Higher Secondary, from Classes I to XII. The languages listed here are taught as first, second, third, classical and elective languages.

*Box 1: Languages taught in the school curriculum*

No.	State/Union Territory	Languages available/offered	Total languages available
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English	11
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Assamese, Butia, Bhoti	6
3.	Assam	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Garo, Hindi, Khasi, Manipuri, Mizo, Nepali, Urdu, Hmar, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English	15
4.	Bihar	Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, English, Bhojpuri, Arabic, Maithili, Persian, Magahi, Sanskrit	10
5.	Chhattisgarh	Hindi, English, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Telugu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Kannada, Oriya	14
6.	Goa	Konkani, Marathi, Hindi, English, Urdu, French, Portuguese, Sanskrit, Arabic	9
7.	Gujarat	Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, English, Urdu, Sindhi, Tamil, Sanskrit	8
8.	Haryana	Hindi, English, Punjabi, Sanskrit, other MILs	4

9.	Himachal Pradesh	Hindi, English, Sanskrit, other MILs	3
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	Urdu, Kashmiri, English, Dogri, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, Gojri, Pahari, Hindi	11
11.	Jharkhand	Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu, others	4
12.	Karnataka	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Sanskrit, Arabic, Konkani, Persian	11
13.	Kerala	Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Urdu, Arabic, French, Latin, Syriac, Russian	12
14.	Madhya Pradesh	Hindi, English, Urdu, Marathi, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Sindhi, Malayalam, Persian, Arabic, French, Russian	12
15.	Maharashtra	Data could not be collected	-
16.	Manipur	Manipuri, Hindi, English, Bengali, Paite, Hmar, Thadou-Kuki, Mizo, Tangkhul, Zou, Nepali, Kom, Vaiphei, Mao	14
17.	Meghalaya	Data could not be collected	-
18.	Mizoram	Mizo, English, Hindi, Bengali, Nepali, Manipuri	6
19.	Nagaland	English, Jenyidie, Sumi, Ao, Lotha, Hindi, Bengali	7
20.	Orissa	Oriya, Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, English, Sanskrit, Persian	8
21.	Punjab	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Nepalese, Tibetan, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Kannada	23
22.	Rajasthan	Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Malayalam, Tamil, Rajasthani, Prakrit, Persian	12
23.	Sikkim	English, Nepali, Bhutia, Lepeha, Limboo, Newari, Tamang, Sharpa, Gurung, Rai, Manger, Sunuwar, Hindi	13
24.	Tamil Nadu	Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Urdu, English, Hindi, Kannada	7
25.	Tripura	Bengali, Kokbarok, English, Bishnupriya, Chokma, Manipuri, Holam, Kuki, Lakshai, Hindi	10
26.	Uttar Pradesh	Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Urdu, Pali, Arabic, Persian, Latin, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Assamese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Nepali, French, German, Tibetan, Chinese, Russian	25
27.	Uttaranchal	Hindi, Sanskrit, English, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Nepali,	7
28.	West Bengal	Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Tibetan, Nepali, Santhali as first language with Alchiki script	11
29.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali	5
30.	Chandigarh	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Nepalese, Tibetan, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Kannada	21

31.	Dadra Naagar Haveli	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit, others	5
32.	Daman and Diu	Gujarati, Hindi, English	3
33.	Delhi	Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, English, Sanskrit; also any modern Indian language as students wish	5
34.	Lakshadweep	Data could not be collected	-
35.	Puducherry	Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Urdu, English, Hindi, French, Kannada	8

Box 1 shows that three states/UTs did not provide data. Among the remaining 32 states/UTs, Daman and Diu offers the smallest number of languages – just three – while at the other extreme 21 languages are taught as subjects in Chandigarh, 23 in Punjab and 25 in Uttar Pradesh.

<i>Table 2: Most frequently mentioned languages offered by states/UTs</i>		
No.	Language	Number of states/UTs offering this language N=32
1=	Hindi	32
1=	English	32
3=	Urdu	21
3=	Sanskrit	21
5	Bengali	15
6	Tamil	13
7	Telugu	12
8=	Arabic	11
8=	Persian	11
10=	Punjabi	10
10=	Marathi	10
12=	Malayalam	9
12=	Kannada	9
12=	Gujarati	9
15	French	7
Sub-total		222
60 other languages		98
Total		320

Table 2 summarises the data in Box 1. The total number of language choices available is 320, an average of ten language choices per state/UT, with, as we saw, a range from three to 25. The two most frequently offered languages are Hindi and English, both of which are taught in all 32 states which made data available.

Another 13 languages are frequently offered by between seven and 21 different states. These 15 most frequently taught languages, therefore, account for 222 (69 per cent) of the 320 language choices available. A further 60 different languages are offered, accounting for just 98 language choices (1.6 states/UTs per language). Thus, in total, 75 different languages are taught in Indian schools (excluding the three states for which information is not available), but Hindi and English between them account for 20 per cent of all the language choices available.

## **Languages taught as first, second and third language**

Languages are taught or available to learners as first, second and third language.

Regarding the number of languages available and offered to students in 2002, the numbers are:

### ***Upper primary***

*96.32 per cent of schools offered just one language as the first language 3.68 per cent of schools offered a choice of two or more languages as the first language*

### ***Secondary***

*93.62 per cent of schools offered only one language as the first language 6.38 per cent of schools offered a choice of two or more languages as the first language*

Full details of the languages taught as first, second and third language in each state/UT are given in Box 2.

*Box 2: First, second and third languages*

No.	State/Union Territory	Stage of schooling	Languages available/offered		
			1st language	2nd language	3rd language
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Primary	Mother tongue/ regional language, Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic	-	English from Class III
		Upper Primary	Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic	Hindi, English	English, Hindi
		Secondary	Mother tongue, Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic	Hindi	English

2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Primary	English	Hindi	-
		Upper Primary	English	Hindi	Sanskrit, Assamese, Butia, Bhoti
		Secondary	English	Hindi	-
		Higher Secondary	English	-	-
3.	Assam	Primary	Assamese, Bengali, English	English	-
		Upper Primary	Assamese, Bengali, English	English	Arabic, Assamese, Hindi, Sanskrit
		Secondary	Assamese, Bengali, English	English	-
4.	Bihar	Primary	Hindi, Urdu, Bengali	English	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi, Urdu, Bengali	English	Sanskrit
		Secondary	Hindi, Urdu, Bengali	English	
5.	Chhattisgarh	Primary	Hindi, English	Hindi, English	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi, English	Hindi, English	Sanskrit
		Secondary	Hindi, English	Hindi, English	Sanskrit
6.	Goa	Primary	Konkani, Marathi	English	-
		Upper Primary	English	Hindi	Konkani, Marathi
		Secondary	English	Hindi	Konkani, Marathi, French, Portuguese
		Higher Secondary	English	Konkani, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, French	Modern Indian language (MIL)
7.	Gujarat	Primary	Gujarati, English	Gujarati, Hindi	-
		Upper Primary	Gujarati, English	Gujarati, Hindi	Hindi, English
		Secondary	Gujarati, English	Gujarati, Hindi	Hindi, English
8.	Haryana	Primary	English, Hindi, MIL	-	-
		Upper Primary	English, Hindi, MIL	English, Hindi	Punjabi, Sanskrit, MIL
		Secondary	English, Hindi, MIL	English, Hindi	-
9.	Himachal Pradesh	Primary	Hindi, English	-	-
		Upper Primary	English, Hindi	English, Hindi	Sanskrit
		Secondary	English, Hindi	English, Hindi	Sanskrit

10.	Jammu and Kashmir	Primary	Hindi, Urdu	English	Kashmiri
		Upper Primary	Hindi, Urdu	English	Kashmiri
		Secondary	Hindi, Urdu	English	Dogri, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian
		Higher Secondary	English	Hindi, Urdu	Dogri, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian
11.	Jharkhand	Primary	Bengali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	-	-
		Upper Primary	Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
		Secondary	Bengali, English, Hindi, Urdu, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
12.	Karnataka	Primary	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil	-	-
		Upper Primary	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil	Kannada, English	Kannada, English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, Persian, Konkani
		Secondary	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil	-	Kannada, English, Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, Persian, Konkani
13.	Kerala	Primary	Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada	English	-
		Upper Primary	Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada; Option: Sanskrit/ Arabic/Urdu	English	Hindi
		Secondary	English	Malayalam/ Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Syriac, French	-

14.	Madhya Pradesh	Primary	Mother tongue	General English or General Hindi	Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi or any other MIL
		Upper Primary	Mother tongue	General English or General Hindi	Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi or any other MIL
		Secondary	Hindi, English, Urdu Sanskrit	Hindi, English	Any other MIL other than languages studied as Language L1 and L2
15.	Maharashtra	Primary	Hindi, Marathi	English	-
		Upper Primary	Marathi, English	Hindi, Marathi, others	English, Hindi, others
		Secondary	Marathi, English	Hindi, Marathi, others	English, Hindi, others
16.	Manipur	Primary (two languages)	Manipuri, Hindi, one of ten recognised tribal languages/MIL	English	-
		Upper Primary (three languages)	Manipuri, Hindi, one of ten recognised tribal languages/MIL	English	Manipuri, Hindi, one of ten recognised tribal languages/MIL
		Secondary (two languages)	Manipuri, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Mizo, Paite, Hmar, Tangkhul, Nepali, Zou, Thadou-Kuki, Vaiphei, Korm, Mao	English	-
17.	Meghalaya	Primary	English, Garo, Khasi, others	English, Garo, Khasi, others	-
		Upper Primary	English, Garo, Khasi, others	English, Garo, Khasi, Hindi, others	Hindi, others
		Secondary	English, Garo, Khasi, others	English, Garo, Khasi, Hindi, others	Hindi, others
18.	Mizoram	Primary	Mizo	English	Hindi
		Upper Primary	Mizo	English	Hindi
		Secondary	English	Mizo	Hindi up to Class VIII
		Higher Secondary	English	Mizo	-

19.	Nagaland	Primary	English	MIL, alternative English	Hindi
		Upper Primary	English	MIL, alternative English	Hindi
		Secondary	English	MIL, alternative English	-
		Higher Secondary	English	MIL, alternative English	-
20.	Orissa	Primary	Oriya	English	-
		Upper Primary	Oriya, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English	Hindi, Sanskrit
		Secondary	Oriya, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English	Hindi, Sanskrit
21.	Punjab	Primary Class I-III	Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu as first language	English as compulsory language	-
		Primary Class IV-V as 2nd language	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu	English as compulsory language	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu (if not studied as L1)
		Upper Primary	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu	English	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and many more MIL (not studied as L2)
		Secondary	Punjabi (pass in Punjabi is compulsory)	English	Hindi; one of following languages can be taken as elective subject: Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Nepalese, Tibetan, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Kannada

22.	Rajasthan	Primary	Hindi	English	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi	English	Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi
		Secondary	Hindi	English	Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi
23.	Sikkim	Primary	English	MIL/local/tribal languages	Hindi (from Class IV-V)
		Upper Primary	English	MIL/local/tribal languages	Hindi
		Secondary	Data could not be collected		
24.	Tamil Nadu	Primary	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, Malayalam, Hindi	English	-
		Upper Primary	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, Malayalam, Hindi	English	-
		Secondary	Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Urdu, Malayalam, Hindi	English	-
25.	Tripura	Primary	Bengali, Kokborok, English, Bishnupriya, Manipuri, Chokma, Holam, Kuki	English	-
		Upper Primary	Bengali, English	English, Bengali	Sanskrit, Hindi
		Secondary	Bengali, English	English, Bengali	-
26.	Uttar Pradesh	Primary	Data could not be collected		
		Upper Primary	Data could not be collected		
		Secondary	Hindi, Urdu	English	Sanskrit, Urdu
27.	Uttaranchal	Primary	Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit	English	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi, Urdu, English	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Sanskrit, Urdu
		Secondary	Hindi, Urdu, English	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Sanskrit, Urdu

28.	West Bengal	Primary	Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Santhali, Telugu, Oriya	English	-
		Upper Primary	Bengali, Hindi, Santhali, Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Urdu, Nepali, Gujarati, Tibetan	English	Hindi, Sanskrit, others
29.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Primary	Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali	English	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali	English	-
		Secondary	Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali	English	-
30.	Chandigarh	Primary	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu	English as compulsory language	Punjabi, Hindi Urdu (not studied as L1)
		Upper Primary	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu	English	Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and many more MIL (not studied as L1)
		Secondary	Punjabi (pass in Punjabi is compulsory)	English	Hindi; one of following can be taken as elective subject: Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Nepalese, Tibetan, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Kannada
31.	Dadra Nahar Haveli	Primary	Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi	English	Sanskrit
		Upper Primary	English, Gujarati, Marathi	Hindi	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
		Secondary	English, Gujarati, Marathi	Hindi	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, others

32.	Daman and Diu	Primary	Gujarati	Hindi	-
		Upper Primary	Gujarati	Hindi	English
		Secondary	Gujarati	Hindi	English
33.	Delhi	Primary	Hindi	English, Urdu, Punjabi	-
		Upper Primary	Hindi	English	Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, any other MIL
		Secondary	Hindi	English	Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, any other MIL
34.	Lakshadweep	Primary	Data could not be collected		
		Upper Primary	Arabic, English, Malayalam	English, Hindi, English	Hindi, Malayalam
		Secondary	Arabic, English, Malayalam	English, Hindi, English	Hindi, Malayalam
35.	Puducherry	Primary	Tamil	English	-
		Upper Primary	Tamil	English	Hindi
		Secondary	Tamil	English	Hindi

As shown in Box 2, the ‘first language’ offered at the primary stage is usually – but not always – the language of the region or the language of neighbouring states; this is in line with the requirement that the ‘first language’ provided at the primary-level school should be the child’s mother tongue or home language. At the secondary stage it is also usually the mother tongue or home language, the language of the region or the state or the language of a neighbouring state which is offered. English is also available as a first language in some states.

Various patterns emerge in different regions of the country. In the primarily Hindi-speaking states the languages offered are generally Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit and the language of the neighbouring state. For example, Bengali is available in the state of Bihar (which borders West Bengal) and Marathi is available in the state of Madhya Pradesh (which borders Maharashtra, the home of Marathi).

The states of the southern part of India tend to offer all four major languages of the region – Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam – as well as Urdu, Hindi and Sanskrit and the languages of neighbouring states. The state of Karnataka has Konkani as a language in addition to the languages mentioned above. These states also offer Persian and Arabic.

The states of Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal fall into a different category. At the primary stage they tend to offer the state’s majority language, Hindi, Urdu and another modern Indian language as first language and then English as second language. At the upper primary stage the scene is a bit different. For example, Maharashtra has Marathi and Hindi as first languages and English as second language at the primary stage; however, at the upper primary stage Marathi and English become first languages and Hindi becomes the second language. It is clear, then, that Marathi, Hindi, English and other modern Indian

languages (MIL) are studied as first, second and third languages in the state. Similarly, Punjab offers Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu as first language and English as a compulsory second language. Meanwhile, Orissa provides Oriya and English as first and second language respectively at the primary stage while Oriya, Hindi, Sanskrit or another MIL are studied as first language at the upper primary stage with English as second language and Hindi or Sanskrit as third language.

The states of the North East region offer some of the tribal languages of that region together with English, Hindi, Sanskrit and Bengali. Some of the North East states teach English as a first language.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir stands alone on many counts. It is the only state which introduces the third language as late as Class IX; consequently, the duration of study of the third language is reduced to only two years.

Tables 3 and 4 summarise the data of Box 2. Data was provided by all 35 states/UTs, but with some gaps. Table 3 shows the number of first, second and third language choices offered by the states at each school level as well as the total number of individual languages made available by the states at each school level. It can be seen that collectively the 33 states for which data is available, provide 83 choices of first language at primary level (an average of 2.5 languages per state); these choices involve 25 different languages. The richest choice is available for first languages at the upper primary level (an average of 2.8 language choices per state) while the least choice is offered for third languages at the primary level (an average of only 0.4 languages per state; in other words, many states do not offer any third language at the primary level). In terms of individual languages, the richest choice is for first languages at the secondary level where, across India, 27 different languages are available. The least choice occurs at the primary level where for both second and third languages only seven different languages are offered.

*Table 3: Numbers of first, second and third language choices and number of individual languages offered by states/UTs (N=35)*

School Level	Language choices offered by states/UTs						Individual languages available		
	L1		L2		L3		L1	L2	L3
	N	$\bar{x}$	N	$\bar{x}$	N	$\bar{x}$			
Primary N=33*	83	2.5	33	1.0	12	0.4	25	7	7
Upper primary N=34**	95	2.8	48	1.4	69	2.0	23	8	19
Secondary N=34***	93	2.7	51	1.5	88	2.6	27	15	25
<b>Sub-total</b>	271		132		169		31	16	30
<b>Total</b>	572						75		

\* Data for primary level missing from two states

\*\* Data for upper primary level missing from one state

\*\*\* Data for secondary level missing from one state

Table 4: Languages most frequently offered by states/UTs as L1, L2 and L3 (N=35)

School level	L1/L2/L3	English	Hindi	Urdu	Sanskrit
Primary N=33*	L1	10	18	7	2
	L2	23	5	1	0
	L3	1	4	2	2
Upper primary N=34**	L1	16	16	11	3
	L2	27	14	0	2
	L3	8	18	6	15
Secondary N=34***	L1	17	18	10	3
	L2	21	14	1	3
	L3	8	12	6	12
<b>Total</b>	131	119	44	42	

\* Data for primary level missing from two states  
 \*\* Data for upper primary level missing from one state  
 \*\*\* Data for secondary level missing from one state

Table 4 shows the frequency with which the four most popular languages – Hindi, English, Urdu and Sanskrit – are offered as first, second and third languages at each of the three school levels. It can be seen from this analysis that English is the most frequently offered second language (offered by 27 of 34 states at the upper primary level, 23 of 33 states at the primary level and 21 of 34 states at the secondary level). However, Hindi is the most frequently offered first language and third language at almost all educational levels.

## Media of instruction

The three-language formula envisaged that children in primary school would study through their mother tongue and that this would lead to harmonious personal development and contribute to a pedagogically sound high quality education. This vision was proposed by the Education Commission in 1964–1966 and was reflected again in the national curricular frameworks from 1975, the National Education Policy (GOI 1986) and the Programme of Action (GOI 1992). In this section we discuss the extent of mother tongue schooling in 2002 (NCERT 2007) in comparison with the situation ten years earlier (NCERT 1993).

Table 5 summarises the proportion of primary and upper primary schools which taught using the mother tongue in 1993 and 2002.

Table 5: Schools teaching through mother tongue in India (per cent)

Policies	Primary		Upper primary	
	1993	2002	1993	2002
Rural schools	91.70	92.39	89.49	92.71
Urban schools	91.32	90.39	86.07	87.37
All schools	91.65	92.07	88.64	91.34

The Seventh Survey found that in 2002 just over 92 per cent of primary schools were teaching through the mother tongue; ten years earlier the figure was almost identical, just below 92 per cent. Rural schools showed an increase of less than one per cent in their tendency to use the mother tongue while urban schools showed a decline of less than one per cent over the ten-year period.

As far as the upper primary stage is concerned, more than 91 per cent of schools were using the mother tongue in 2002, an increase of just over two percentage points compared to 1993. In 1993 rural upper primary schools were about three per cent more likely to use the mother tongue compared to urban schools. By 2002 the proportion of both rural and urban schools using the mother tongue had increased, but the rate of increase was slightly higher in the rural schools.

Overall, then, more than 90 per cent of schools at the primary and upper primary stages teach through the children's mother tongue; there was a slight overall increase in the number of schools teaching through the mother tongue between 1993 and 2002.

The Seventh Survey also found that 12.14 per cent of primary schools, 14.47 per cent of upper primary schools and 8.53 per cent of secondary schools were offering two or more media of instruction. The sixth Survey, a decade earlier, showed that the equivalent figures were 7.21 per cent, 12.49 per cent and 13.34 per cent respectively. In other words, the proportion of primary and upper primary schools offering multiple media of instruction had increased while the proportion of secondary schools making such an offer had declined quite sharply.

The sixth and seventh surveys also reported how many schools were teaching through the media of Hindi and English. The findings are summarised in Table 6. In 1993 Hindi was used as a medium of instruction in 42 per cent of primary schools, 41 per cent of upper primary schools and 34 per cent of secondary schools. By 2002 the figures had become almost 47 per cent at primary level, just over 47 per cent at upper primary and 41 per cent at secondary. That is to say, there had been an increase in schools offering Hindi medium education at each educational level over the decade, but secondary schools continued to be rather less likely than primary and upper primary schools to do this.

Policies	Primary		Upper primary		Secondary	
	1993	2002	1993	2002	1993	2002
Hindi as medium	42.26	46.79	40.93	47.41	33.94	41.32
English as medium	4.99	12.98	15.91	18.25	18.37	25.84

The pattern regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction is rather different. In 1993 English was used in five per cent, 16 per cent and 18 per cent of primary, upper primary and secondary schools respectively. But in 2002 the equivalent figures were 13 per cent, 18 per cent and 26 per cent. In other words, the tendency for schools to offer English as a medium of instruction had increased at every level over the decade, with the most rapid increases occurring in primary and secondary schools.

It is particularly striking that over a quarter of all secondary schools in India now claim to offer English as a medium of instruction.

It is also interesting to note that the number of states/UTs offering education at primary and upper primary levels through the medium of languages other than the majority language increased from 30 to 32, indicating an increasing awareness of the need to cater to the needs of linguistic minorities.

Box 3 shows, state by state, the languages offered as media of instruction at each educational level.

Box 3: Media of instruction				
No.	State/Union Territory	Media of instruction		
		Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Telugu, Urdu, Oriya, English, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil	Telugu, Urdu, Oriya, English, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil	Telugu, Urdu, Oriya, English, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	English, Hindi	English	English
3.	Assam	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, English	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, English, Hindi, others	Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, English, Hindi, others
4.	Bihar	Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, English	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, others
5.	Chhattisgarh	Hindi, others	Hindi, others	English, Hindi, others
6.	Goa	English, Konkani, Marathi, Urdu, Kannada (dual medium)	English, Marathi	English, Marathi
7.	Gujarat	Gujarati, others	English, Gujarati, Hindi, others	English, Gujarati, Hindi, others
8.	Haryana	English, Hindi, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
9.	Himachal Pradesh	English, Hindi, others	English, Hindi, others	English, Hindi, others
10.	Jammu and Kashmir	Dogri, English, Hindi, Kashmiri, Urdu, others	Dogri, English, Hindi, Kashmiri, Urdu, others	Dogri, English, Hindi, Kashmiri, Urdu, others
11.	Jharkhand	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	Bengali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	Bengali, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
12.	Karnataka	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic	Kannada, English, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Malayalam, Sanskrit, Arabic
13.	Kerala	Malayalam, English, Tamil, Kannada (dual medium)	Malayalam, English, Tamil, Kannada (dual medium)	Malayalam, English, Tamil, Kannada (dual medium)
14.	Madhya Pradesh	Hindi, English, Urdu, Marathi	English, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, others	English, Hindi, Urdu

15.	Maharashtra	Marathi, Hindi	English, Marathi, Hindi, others	English, Marathi, Hindi, others
16.	Manipur	English, Hindi, Manipuri, others	English, Hindi, Manipuri, others	English, Hindi, Manipuri, others
17.	Meghalaya	English, Garo, Khasi, others	English	English
18.	Mizoram	English, Mizo	English, Mizo, others	English, Mizo, others
19.	Nagaland	Angami, Ao, English, Hindi, Konyak, Lotha, Sema, others	Angami, Ao, English, Hindi, Konyak, Sema, others	Angami, English, Hindi, others
20.	Orissa	English, Oriya	English, Hindi, Oriya, others	English, Hindi, Oriya, Sanskrit, others
21.	Punjab	English, Hindi, Punjabi	English, Hindi, Punjabi, others	English, Hindi, Punjabi, others
22.	Rajasthan	Hindi, others	Hindi, others	Hindi, others
23.	Sikkim	English, others	English, others	English, others
24.	Tamil Nadu	English, Tamil (dual medium)	Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Urdu, Kannada	Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Urdu, Kannada
25.	Tripura	Bengali, Kokborok, English, others	Bengali, English, others	Bengali, English, others
26.	Uttar Pradesh	Hindi, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others	English, Hindi, Sanskrit, others
27.	Uttaranchal	Hindi, others	English, Hindi, Urdu, others	English, Hindi, Urdu, others
28.	West Bengal	Bengali, others	Bengali, Hindi, English, Urdu, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Tibetan, Nepali	Bengali, Hindi, English, Urdu, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Tibetan, Nepali
29.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Bengali, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu	Bengali, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu	Bengali, English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu
30.	Chandigarh	English, Hindi, Punjabi, others	English, Hindi, Punjabi, others	English, Hindi, Punjabi, others
31.	Dadra Nagar Haveli	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit	English, Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit
32.	Daman and Diu	English, Gujarati	English, Gujarati	English, Gujarati
33.	Delhi	English, Hindi, Urdu, others	English, Hindi, Urdu, others	English, Hindi, Urdu, others
34.	Lakshadweep	Malayalam, others	English, Malayalam, others	English, Malayalam
35.	Puducherry	English, Tamil, others	English, Tamil, others	English, Tamil, others

From Box 3 we can see that at least two languages are available as the media of instruction in each state/UT, while two states (Karnataka and West Bengal) offer as many as ten. The state with the largest number of media of instruction at the primary level is Nagaland, with at least seven languages on offer.

There is a general tendency for a wider range of languages to be made available as media of instruction in upper primary and secondary schools compared to primary schools. An example is Orissa, which offers just Oriya and English as media of instruction at the primary level but in addition provides Hindi, Sanskrit and other MILs at the secondary stage.

Other states and UTs, however, offer the same number of media of instruction at all levels. These include Daman and Diu, which provides only Gujarati and English in primary, upper primary and secondary schools.

Yet other states have a policy of offering a wider range of languages of instruction in primary schools compared to higher levels. Goa provides an illustration here, where five languages – Konkani, Marathi, Kannada, Hindi and English – are used at the primary level but only two – Marathi and English – are available at the upper primary and secondary levels.

Unlike the rest of the country, three states (Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu) have a ‘dual medium’ policy, which means that two different media of instruction are available in the same school.

Tables 7 and 8 summarise the data recorded in Box 3. From Table 7 we can see that the 35 states/UTs offer a total of 355 language choices for medium of instruction, with somewhat greater choice at the upper primary and secondary levels (124 choices each) compared to the primary level (107 choices). The total number of individual languages offered as medium of instruction is 31. As we noted in the Introduction above, according to Rao (2008), approximately 60 languages were used as media of instruction in the 1980s and 47 were used as media at the time of Rao’s own survey.

*Table 7: Number of language choices and number of individual languages offered as medium of instruction by states/UTs (N=35)*

School level	Language choices offered by states/UTs	Individual languages available
Primary	107	31
Upper primary	124	25
Secondary	124	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>31</b>

Meanwhile, Table 8 summarises information concerning the five most frequently reported languages used as media of instruction. It is interesting to note that higher proportions of states and UTs claim to make English available as a medium of instruction than do those offering Hindi as a medium; this pattern applies at all three educational levels. For example, 33 of 35 states say that they offer English as

a medium of instruction at the secondary level, while only 24 states offer Hindi as a medium at this level.

*Table 8: Languages most frequently offered by states/UTs as medium of instruction (N=35)*

School level	English	Hindi	Urdu	Tamil	Sanskrit
Primary	27	21	7	6	3
Upper primary	32	24	9	7	6
Secondary	33	24	9	7	7

However, a word of caution is required here. The fact that a state allows English to be offered as a medium of instruction does not mean that every school in the state will be able to implement this policy, nor that every child in each school will choose English. In fact, as we saw from Table 5, 91 per cent of schools teach through the mother tongue, while from Table 6 it was observed that only 26 per cent of schools offer English as a medium of instruction compared to 41 per cent offering Hindi as medium.

## Introduction of second and third languages

This section considers the points in a child's education when the second and third languages are introduced and the number of years which are allocated for studying these languages.

### Introduction of second language

Table 9 summarises policies regarding when the second language should be used. In all states and UTs the second language is introduced within the first five years of schooling.

*Table 9: Introduction of second language (N=35)*

Class at which L2 is introduced	Duration of study (years)	States/Union Territories
Class I	10	Andhra Pradesh (English), Arunachal Pradesh (Hindi), Bihar (Urdu, Bengali), Chhattisgarh (English/MIL), Goa (English), Gujarat (English), Himachal Pradesh (English), Jammu and Kashmir (English), Madhya Pradesh (General English/General Hindi), Manipur (Hindi/one of the recognised languages/MIL), Mizoram (English), Nagaland (MIL/Alternative English), Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu), Rajasthan (English), Sikkim (MIL), Tamil Nadu (English), Tripura (English), Uttaranchal (English), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Hindi/English), Chandigarh (Hindi/English), Delhi (English, Urdu, Punjabi), Puducherry (English)
Class III	8	Assam (Hindi/Bengali), Kerala (English), Orissa (English, Hindi, Sanskrit), Daman and Diu (Hindi), Dadra Nahar Haveli (Hindi)
Class V	5	Karnataka (English), West Bengal (English)

From Table 9 it can be seen that 22 out of the 35 states/UTs introduce the second language from the first year of schooling; in the other states teaching of the second language starts either in Class III (for example, Assam) or in Class V (Karnataka and West Bengal).

In 21 cases the second language is English while Hindi is offered as a second language in eleven states. Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi are also offered as second languages in states where these languages are spoken or which have neighbour states where they are spoken. Out of the 21 states offering English as the second language, 17 introduce it from Class I, two from Class III and two from Class V.

Assuming children stay in school until they complete Class X, those in the majority of states will be able to study their second language for ten years. However, those who begin studying the second language in Class III will be able to study it for a maximum of eight years and children in Karnataka and West Bengal will be able to study English as their second language for just five years.

### Introduction of third language

Only 26 states reported offering a third language, but there is considerable variation in policy, as Table 10 indicates. Fourteen states introduce the third language from Class VI, meaning that children who stay in school until the end of Class X will be able to study that language for five years. Four states start the third language in Class V, so allowing children six years of study. Three states offer a third language from Class III and two make third language provision from Class IV. Just one state begins third language teaching in Class VII, another in Class VIII and yet another in Class IX.

*Table 10: Introduction of third language (N=26)*

Class at which L2 is introduced	Duration of study (years)	States/Union Territories
Class III	8	Manipur, Mizoram (Hindi), Nagaland (Hindi), Uttaranchal (English, Sanskrit, MIL)
Class IV	7	Punjab (Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, any MIL), Sikkim (Hindi)
Class V	6	Dada Nagar Haveli, Goa (Marathi, Konkani, French, Portuguese), Kerala (Hindi)
Class VI	5	Andhra Pradesh (Hindi), Arunachal Pradesh (Sanskrit, Assamese, Butia), Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (Urdu, Sanskrit, Marathi or any MIL), Rajasthan (Sanskrit, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujarati, Punjabi, any MIL), Uttar Pradesh (Sanskrit, Urdu, any MIL), West Bengal (Sanskrit, Hindi), Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Daman and Diu (English), Delhi (Sanskrit, Urdu, Punjabi, any MIL).
Class VII	4	Tripura (Sanskrit, Hindi)
Class VIII	3	Orissa (Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit, Telugu, MIL)
Class IX	2	Jammu and Kashmir (Dogri, Boding, Punjabi, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian)

The third language in most non-Hindi-speaking states is Hindi if it has not already been introduced as a second language, while in Hindi-speaking states it is Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Persian or the language of a neighbouring state.

English is mentioned as a third language by only two states (Uttaranchal from Class III and Daman and Diu from Class VI).

## The role and place of English

English was perceived as a library language during the formative years of India's independence; indeed at one point there was a proposal that Hindi should be given fully fledged official language status and that English should be abolished from public use. However, having been granted 'associate official language' status (though it is still not a language listed in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution), English continued to dominate higher education. Increasingly, it has been spreading its wings and is moving into school education.

This study has found that:

- 75 different languages are used in India's education system.
- 31 different languages are used as media of instruction; this is approximately half the number of languages that were being used for this purpose in the 1980s.
- English is taught somewhere in the curriculum of all the 32 states and Union Territories which provided data for the survey reported here. Only Hindi is taught in as many states.
- The percentage of schools teaching English as a 'first language' doubled between 1993 and 2002 from five per cent to ten per cent in primary schools and from seven per cent to 13 per cent in upper primary schools.
- English is offered as a second language by more states than any other language.
- 33 of 35 states claim to offer English as a medium of instruction; this is more than any other language.
- Between 1993 and 2002 there was an increase in the proportion of schools offering English as a medium of instruction; the sharpest increase (from five per cent to 13 per cent) occurred in primary schools.
- By 2002, more than a quarter of all secondary schools were offering English as a medium of instruction.
- English is offered as a second language in 19 states, of which 16 introduce it in Class I, one in Class III and two as late as Class V.

There has been a shift in perception as the demand for English is now felt in every quarter, even though there are pedagogically sound arguments against the early introduction of the language. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the recent curricular revision at the national level – which culminated in the framework for the National Curriculum 2005 – records half a century of development in

attitudes towards English. English is now an institutionalised subject in the school curriculum.

However, English is still simultaneously sought after and suspected (Tickoo 1996). The motives, generally, are not only social-political but academic too. While the demand increases on the one hand, the quality of English language education in our state-run schools, more particularly in rural schools, presents an abysmal picture. The divide between urban and rural is further exacerbated by the increasing tendency to use English as a medium of instruction. This paradox of demand and suspicion is reflected through the paradox of access depicted by the report of the National Knowledge Commission (NKC):

*There is an irony in the situation. English has been part of our education system for more than a century. Yet English is beyond the reach of most of our young people, which makes for highly unequal access. Indeed, even now, barely more than one percent of our people use it as a second language, let alone a first language ... But NKC believes that the time has come for us to teach our people, ordinary people, English as a language in schools. Early action in this sphere would help us build an inclusive society and transform India into a knowledge society. (GOI 2007)*

The National Focus Group on Teaching of English has adopted a strong position in addressing the 'English language question':

*English is in India today a symbol of people's aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independence India, tailored to high education now felt to be insufficiently inclusive socially and linguistically, the current state of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena. (NCERT 2006:1)*

Stating that 'English does not stand alone', the National Focus Group's position paper argues that:

*(English) needs to find its place. (i) Along with other Indian Languages (a) in regional medium schools, how can children's other languages strengthen English learning? (b) in English medium schools, how can other Indian languages be valorised, reducing the perceived hegemony of English? (ii) In relation to other subjects, a language across the curriculum perspective is perhaps of particular relevance to primary education. Language is best acquired through different meaning-making contexts and hence all teaching in a sense is language teaching. This perspective also captures the centrality of language in abstract thought in secondary education. (NCERT 2006:4)*

As stated above, English language education has to find its place in the holistic and broader plan of language education where it plays a complementary and supplementary role in the creation of multilinguals/bilinguals. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 stresses the need for a multilingual education from the beginning of schooling and English has its place in this scheme. However, the Framework also cautions about the danger of introducing English (or, for that

matter, any language) without ensuring that the basic provisions and infrastructure for its study are already in place. Language teachers with a satisfactory level of proficiency and quality materials to support the teaching-learning process are among the essentials for language learning in any context and are even more important in the case of second or third languages.

## Conclusions

Language policy in India has adapted itself to the changing demands and aspirations of people over the period of time from 1947 to the present. Change has occurred on many counts. Firstly, the question of a national language – which was wisely addressed during the formative years of independence by not declaring any language as the national language – has now been permanently settled. The existence of English in India means that it is no longer necessary to consider the issue of a national language. In other words, India does not need a national language since there are no functions which a national language might play that are not already fulfilled in some other way. The beneficiaries of this *de facto* policy are the indigenous Indian languages in the regions where they prevail; if any additional function were to be required then it could be satisfied by bringing in English.

In a way an associate official language, English knowingly or unknowingly has played an instrumental role in maintaining the diversity of India's language scene because the existence of English has meant that it has not been necessary to select any one Indian languages as a national language. In fact, the states which used to rally to slogans such as *angriji hatao* (remove English) are now eagerly introducing English in the first year of schooling.

English today is almost a compulsory second language. Once deprived sections of the society now perceive the language as an instrument for progress. The recent news of a temple for English language in a village in the Hindi heartland (Pandey 2011) tells the thing.

However, the public's demands are not being met meaningfully. Most schools in the country do not have the facilities and proficient teachers needed to cater to the demand. As mentioned above, meaningful language education requires teachers who are skilled and knowledgeable as well as contextualised materials (print and others). But an enabling English language environment in the school also needs to be ensured. The most important of these three prerequisites is the English teacher, but the English language proficiency of English language teachers in quite a number of schools is questionable. Consequently, teacher education is one major area which needs drastic changes if quality teachers are to become available. Materials development (particularly textbooks) for the teaching and learning of English has not yet been professionalised. On the contrary, materials development has been commercialised to the extent that India now has thousands of publishers who publish English language textbooks. An enabling English language environment also cannot be created overnight. Learners need to experience appropriate input so that they can become engaged with the language, but a language teacher who himself or herself does not possess the required proficiency cannot create such an environment. Children need to feel the language in the air in school because, for

the vast majority of children, English is not available outside school. The creation of such an enabling environment has to be encouraged through curricular and other activities in and outside school.

It is better to have English taught as a subject rather than impose a bad English medium education. Equipping English language education with the essentials in the native medium schools would benefit learning in general and language learning in particular. But converting schools to become English medium without proper support would be detrimental and counterproductive. Schools can be developed as multimedia schools where both the content subjects and the language are taught and learnt well in a complementary and supplementary manner. A ‘language across the curriculum’ perspective and a strategy of multilingualism (NCERT 2005) would be of benefit on many counts. The centrality of language in learning needs to be recognised. English, then, can play a vital role as a language of mutual benefit – benefiting Indian languages as well as itself – and so enriching education as a whole.

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